

women do not have the option of safeguarding their health and prenatal well-being. Therefore, I have introduced the Informed Choice Act, H.R. 223. This legislation authorizes Health and Human Services to establish simple grants for not-for-profit and community-based health clinics to purchase ultrasound equipment. The centers that purchase these machines will be able to provide free examinations to women who are unable to obtain access to this critical care. That is, women that are poor. Each year, these pregnancy centers serve hundreds of thousands of women, ranging from girls barely in their teens to women in their mid to late thirties. Many of these women are among the poorest of the poor. For them, the free care that they receive is an essential lifeline. Access to ultrasound equipment is clearly one of the best things that this Congress can do to promote women's health and prenatal care.

Women understand the importance of ultrasound equipment. A recent poll confirms this. In order to provide women in crisis pregnancies with sufficient prenatal care and the full scope of information about their pregnancy, I urge my colleagues today to cosponsor my legislation. It is clear that these women view ultrasounds as an essential resource, a resource for women who are faced with unplanned pregnancies struggling with that prime decision. Additionally, the Focus on the Family organization found that an overwhelming 84 percent of women surveyed decide against abortion after viewing an ultrasound of their unborn baby.

Women have a right to know what is going on during their pregnancy. These ultrasound images, specifically with the 3-D and 4-D technology, depict fetuses beyond 24 weeks sucking their thumbs, sticking their tongues out and even making emotional faces.

So again, my colleagues, I urge you to join me in protecting the health of women and their unborn children by cosponsoring the Informed Choice Act, H.R. 223. This bill is about giving vulnerable women the information they need about their pregnancy and making this critical technology available to all Americans.

WHEN THEY COME HOME: MEETING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF OUR TROOPS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. TIM MURPHY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, over 17 percent of soldiers returning from Iraq, higher than any other measured military conflict, meet the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. Predeployment mental health screening, availability of treatment, perception toward treat-

ment and public attitudes of the soldiers' actions all affect the vulnerability and prognosis for this disorder.

PTSD is a severe anxiety disorder that develops after a traumatic event involving physical danger. It is also called "shell shock" or "battle fatigue" in other wars and is particularly prevalent among soldiers who have experienced wartime combat. Symptoms can include insomnia, irritability, inability to concentrate, panic, terror, dread, despair, grief and include daytime recollections, traumatic nightmares or combat flashbacks. Most persons exposed to severe trauma do not develop symptoms. Onset can be immediate but more commonly occurs from a few months to years after the event.

Currently, the Department of Defense provides mental health services for 180 days following discharge and the VA offers its health care services, including mental health, to veterans at no cost for 2 years following discharge. Afterwards, veterans may continue to receive mental health treatment but are subject to copayments.

Unit support while still deployed helps reduce symptom risk. Once soldiers return home these supports end, but ongoing support is essential to reduce the risk, from families, friends, veterans, the VA and our society as a whole. Many with early symptoms of PTSD, however, isolate from social contact and do not benefit from these supports.

In the current war in Iraq, unlike Vietnam, society as a whole is generally able to separate support for the soldier from support for the war. However, as criticism for the war increases and the public questions the purpose and outcome of this war, a significant question remains as to the impact upon the soldier's mental health of these expressions of doubt. For those at risk for PTSD and since hopelessness may raise the risk, society's comments of the situation may increase the soldier's sense of personal blame and lead the soldiers to question if they did their job well. Or they may develop a sense of worthlessness and guilt that their fellow soldiers lost their lives for a cause that was not supported by the country. Further research must be done to explore this link, but it also raises an important issue. Not only is there a concern for a stigma for the war action itself but also getting help. The majority of soldiers who need treatment for PTSD and mental health symptoms do not seek help for fear of being seen as weak, for fear of being treated differently by their commander, or fear of future harm to their career.

Pictures, commentary and news coverage of this war affects not only recent combat veterans but extends to those of prior wars. A survey of 70 Vietnam veterans stated that 57 percent reported flashbacks after watching reports about this war on television, and almost half faced sleep disorders.

Mr. Speaker, there is a need for specialized military mental health serv-

ices. As of May last year, of the 5 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan soldiers who may have been at risk, only 22 percent sought help from mental health providers. The rest sought help from primary care doctors, many without mental health training.

The National Defense Authorization Act of last year created the defense task force on mental health. Within a year, they are to submit a report to us with a long-term plan to improve the effectiveness for Armed Forces who have experienced multiple deployments. But Congress can improve the Department of Defense referral process for mental health evaluations by psychiatrists/psychologists to better meet the needs of our troops. As chronic PTSD symptoms can continue for years, the VA should extend the 2-year universal coverage period for mental health services for our Nation's soldiers when they return from active duty and combat. And we need to study the effects of the 24-hour media exposure on the occurrence of PTSD symptoms upon returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Congress can also increase public awareness of PTSD to reduce the stigma for returning veterans and for them to take advantage of mental health services at the VA.

Working together, we can ensure that none of our Nation's veterans suffering with PTSD are left behind, but above all as Members of Congress we have to make sure that the things we do and say respond to the caveat to first do no harm.

DELEGATE VOTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the time and the opportunity to talk with my colleagues about an issue that is of tremendous importance to us. It is certainly one that I have heard from from my constituents in Tennessee's Seventh Congressional District. They are quite concerned about this. It seems that all of a sudden last week, outside of regular order, outside of the normal committee process, an old idea resurfaced and came before this body in the form of a piece of legislation that is not going through regular order, is not going through the committee process. And I had many constituents who were quite concerned about this, and how could a bill that is important to us, important to our Nation, important to our structure and our way of governing come before us without people being aware? This issue is the issue of delegate voting. We are going to hear more about this today and tomorrow. Then the Democrat majority is going to push this to the floor for a vote so that they can circumvent what is the constitutional underpinning of this great Nation.

Now, we as Republicans believe in the constitutional principle of one person, one vote. We think that that is important. It is important to adhere to that, that everyone is equal under the law. Everyone is entitled to their vote, everyone is entitled to that representation of one person, one vote. And to change that principle and allow delegate voting would require an amendment of the Constitution. That is not a statement that comes only from me but the Democrats can look at their former Speaker of the House, Tom Foley, who is on record in 1970 when this old issue came up at that point. In 1970, former Speaker of the House Tom Foley, a Democrat from Washington State said, and I am quoting, it is very clear that a constitutional amendment would be required to give delegates a vote in the Committee of the Whole, which is the full House.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this act by the Democrats is nothing more than an unconstitutional power grab that they want in order to be able to further their agenda. So we feel that it is important to stand against this. We feel that it is also important that we look at the Constitution, when it says that the House shall be composed of Members chosen by the people of the several States, not delegates representing the non-State territories. There is a distinction here. There is a bright line here.

We also feel like that it is important to note that this plan would run over that tenderly held principle of one person, one vote. The average congressional district has approximately 650,000 people. Mine in Tennessee has a little bit more than that. We know that Speaker PELOSI's has 640,000 people. But we also know that American Samoa has 57,000 people, the Virgin Islands 108,000, and Guam 155,000. So the Delegates that represent those numbers of individuals could vote to raise your taxes, but—and this is another point that concerned my constituents—they would not have to pay them. So their Delegates can vote to raise the taxes of my constituents in Tennessee but those Delegates' constituents wouldn't have to be paying the taxes. They get benefits, they want a vote, they want to use that money. They are just not having to pay the taxes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that this is something that many people would say, well, if we're going to have equity under the law, if they're not going to have to pay through those taxes, if they're going to have a Congressman for 57,000 people and they have their vote for 57,000 or 108,000 or 155,000, then why don't we just change the rules for everybody? The answer to that, Mr. Speaker, we know is because this Constitution means something. This is a Nation of laws. It is a Nation that is built on the rule of law. And to give Delegates the right to vote is inappropriate. It is a circumvention of our law. It is a violation of our Constitution.

Now, we know that the Democrat leadership is trying to ram this through the House and there are some reasons for doing this. They feel like they can literally do it on the sly this week. Tonight is the State of the Union. They feel like they can do this in the shadow of the State of the Union without going through the process of the committees, without going through the process of amending the Constitution. We also know that they would choose to do it before they establish regular order.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we have not been in the committee process. The committees have not been functioning. We have been having bills come straight to the floor without the due diligence and the oversight that is done by the committees. We know the Democrats would choose to circumvent that process and pass this before regular order is established. It is an issue of great concern. I appreciate very much that my constituents have been involved in the issue.

HOPING FOR LESS TALK AND MORE ACTION FROM WHITE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentleman from New York (Mr. McNULTY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. McNULTY. Mr. Speaker, the President is going to come here tonight and by all indications he is going to call for a new era of cooperation. I hope that comes to pass. But that is not his record. On Iraq, he continues to ignore the American people, both parties in this Congress, and even his own generals. And our troops continue to suffer the consequences.

On energy policy, I have been in this chamber for the last several years when the President has spoken, I believe eloquently, about the need to develop alternative sources of energy. Then he gave huge multibillion-dollar tax cuts to the oil companies.

Health insurance is also a subject he is going to address tonight. In the words of former Governor Al Smith of New York, "Let's look at the record." When this President took office, there were 39 million people uninsured in this country. Today that number is 47 million, up by 8 million people. We're going in the wrong direction.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that in the year 2007, from the White House and from this administration, we get less talk and more action.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 18 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Lord God, King of the universe, Creator of all, tonight television cameras and media from around the world will be focused on this Chamber, where President George W. Bush, 43rd President of the United States of America, will address a joint session of the 110th Congress in his State of the Union.

Holding the office of the highest authority in the land and elected by the people of this Nation, he has become a world figure whose words and actions draw the attention of peoples worldwide and will shape the human events of our time. Thereby, he is so deserving of our prayer today and every day. We owe him our prayerful support as free citizens who pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

Lord God, bless, protect and guide our President, for Divine Providence has called him at this moment to be a living symbol of free democracy and a blessing for this Nation and for the world. Grant him health, wisdom and strength.

For You, O Lord God, give strength and power to Your people, both now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 38. Concurrent resolution providing for a joint session of Congress to receive a message from the President.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 8002 of title 26,